

# SPIN CYCLE

## AIRMAN PHOTOGRAPHER TAKES ON THE AIR FORCE CENTRIFUGE

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PHOTOS BY MASTER SGT. LANCE CHEUNG AND MASTER SGT. SCOTT WAGERS

“LESS TIGHT... BUTT TIGHT... BREATHE,” a voice yells at me. With all that I can muster, I turn my lower body to stone and when told to — breathe. It’s all one can do when riding a human salad spinner with an attitude and 1,000 horsepower. That kind of energy and centrifugal force can multiply your body weight six-fold in a single second.

On this day, I was going for the “big kahuna” — 9Gs FOR 15 SECONDS. That’s nine times the gravitational effect (G-force) on my body weight of 180 pounds, or 1,620 pounds being forced into the seat in an enclosed gondola at the end of a 19 1/2-foot steel arm.

Inside the gondola, I’m wishing for either mommy or

the command to breathe — if only to let my heart suck in a bit of blood and squeeze it up to my fading brain.

My lifeline — the encouraging voice of Staff Sgt. Max Alvarado, an aerospace physiology specialist with the Air Force Research Laboratory’s Detachment 5 at Brooks City-Base, Texas, was shouting commands [at the 3-second mark] to help me keep sight of my goal — 9-G’s.

Since peripheral vision is often the first indicator of blood loss from the brain. I fight to keep sight of the red center and two outer green lights set a few feet away. The video of my spin [see [www.af.mil/news/airman/0507/Xtreme.shtml](http://www.af.mil/news/airman/0507/Xtreme.shtml)] shows

my eyes open, but inside my head, things were turning gray and murky. Then Sergeant Alvarado shouts,

“COMING DOWN, COMING DOWN ... OUTSTANDING!”

As the centrifuge slowed down, I have an uncontrollable sense of tumbling forward and down. Thanks to the Coriolis effect my sense of what is normal is completely warped. In reality, I am sitting perfectly still. After a few minutes, the sensation was gone. What stayed was knowing I had survived more G-forces than I had ever faced during any of my fighter missions and that I had beat an Air Force extreme machine.

### THE PRIMARY MISSION

of the centrifuge at the Air Force Research Laboratory, Detachment 5, is to develop and assess the effectiveness of experimental aircrew G-protection equipment and methods. Plus it provides a means for indoctrination and training of aeromedical specialists and other aerospace personnel, such as pilots and astronauts, in using protective techniques.